

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 AID-20 DRC-01 IO-14 /135 W

----- 002831

R 121310Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1275

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 1208

BRASILIA AND RIO FOR ASST SECY KUBISCH

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CO US PN

SUBJ: COLOMBIAN TRANSIT RIGHTS - PANAMA CANAL AND RAILWAY

REF: A. BOGOTA 1073; B. BOGOTA 1209

1. THE QUESTION OF COLOMBIAN TRANSIT RIGHTS ON THE PANAMANIAN ISTHMUS HAS, DUE TO THE INFLAMMATORY NATURE OF THE STATEMENTS BY PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATOR LOPEZ GUEVARA, BECOME SOMETHING OF A PUBLIC ISSUE HERE. (REF B)

2. PRIOR TO THE LOPEZ GUEVERA STATEMENT, FONMIN VAZQUEZ HAD INDICATED TO THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES (REF A) HIS INTENTION OF REASSERTING GOC TRANSIT RIGHTS AS GUARANTEED BY THE THOMPSON-URRUTIA TREATY OF 1914. THAT AIM WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY LAST WEEK'S NOTE FROM AMB BOTERO TO THE SECRETARY. AT THE TIME OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE, VAZQUEZ ALSO INDICATED THAT HIS PRIMARY INTENTION WAS TO SEE THAT COLOMBIA WAS NOT BYPASSED ON THIS

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MATTER AND THAT THE GOC WOULD ONLY GIVE UP ITS TRANSIT PRIVILEGES

FOLLOWING APPROPRIATE NEGOTIATIONS.

3. THE LOPEZ GUEVERA STATEMENT HAS, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A MINOR ISSUE. ASSUMING SOME CONCILIATORY STATEMENT BY THE GOP ON THIS MATTER, OR AT LEAST A LACK OF FURTHER PROVOCATIVE COMMENTS, WE BELIEVE THE QUESTION CAN BE HANDLED BY TIMELY CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE GOC DURING THE COURSE OF THE US-PANAMANIAN CANAL NEGOTIATIONS.

4. THE LOPEZ GUEVERA COMMENTS HAVE MADE A PUBLIC ISSUE OF WHAT OTHERWISE AMOUNTED ESSENTIALLY TO THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR THE US TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT COLOMBIA'S TREATY RIGHTS IN THIS AREA. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS OBJECTIVE CAN STILL BE ACHIEVED BY THE US AND COLOMBIA AND THE PROBLEM ITSELF RESOLVED IN A LOW-KEY MANNER. CONVERSELY WE BELIEVE THAT FURTHER PANAMANIAN STATEMENTS OF THE SORT ISSUED BY LOPEZ GUEVERA COULD TURN THE MATTER INTO A POPULAR ISSUE, INVOLVING COLOMBIA'S NATIONAL PRIDE AND, AS A CONSEQUENCE, COULD BECOME A STICKING POINT FOR ALL THREE NATIONS. THE STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MIN VAZQUEZ THAT HE MAY INTRODUCE THE QUESTION AT THE MEXICAN MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS IS INDICATIVE OF THE TROUBLESOME POTENTIAL OF THIS ESSENTIALLY SECONDARY ISSUE.
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